MARVEL COMICS
EYE OF THE PUMA PART TWO
the SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN
PAWNS OF THE BLACK CROW!
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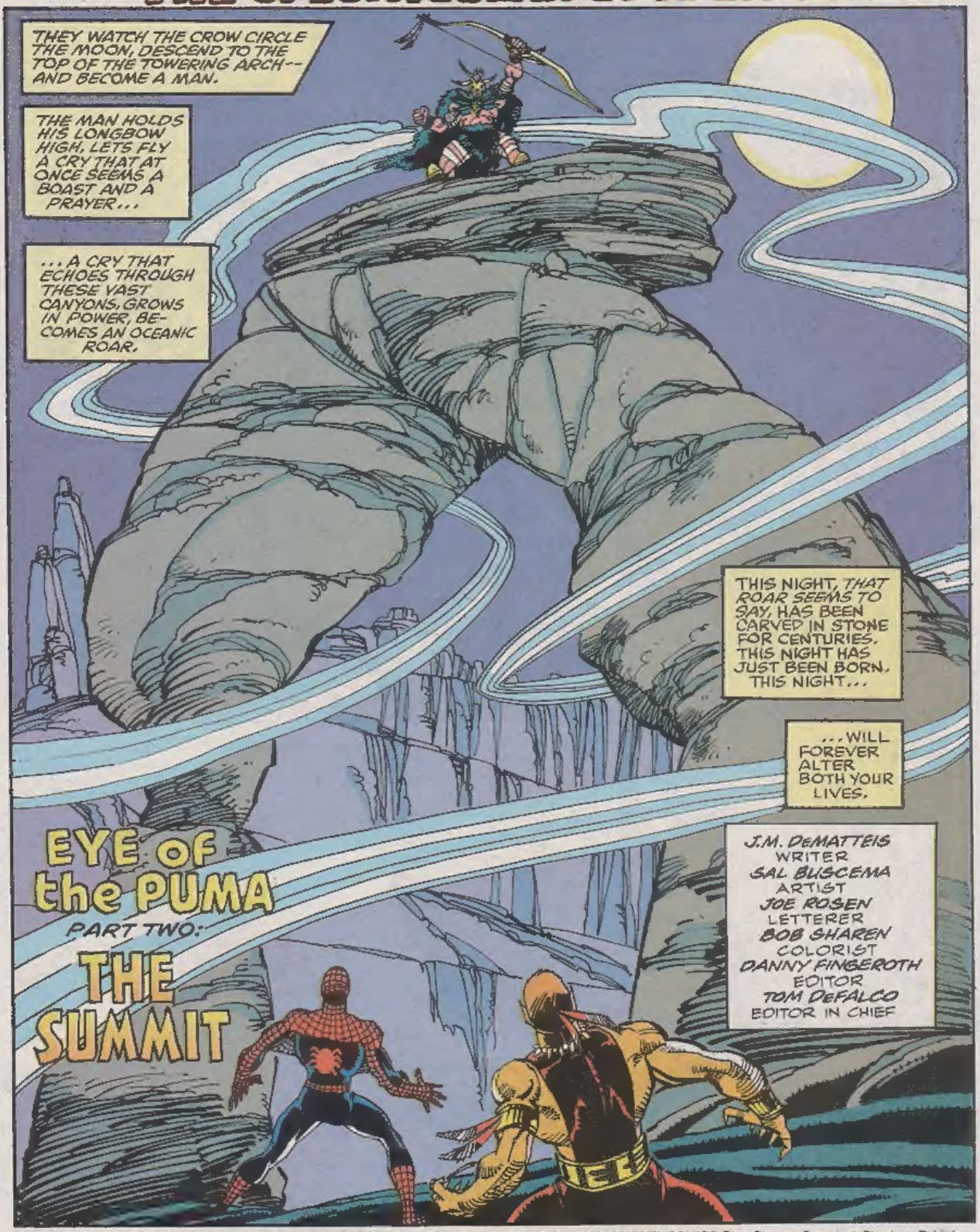
THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE SPIDER, STUDENT PETER PARKER GAINED THE PROPORTIONATE STRENGTH AND AGILITY OF AN ARACHNID! ARMED WITH HIS WONDROUS WEB-SHOOTERS, THE RELUCTANT SUPER HERO STRUGGLES WITH SINISTER SUPER-VILLAINS, MAKING ENDS MEET, AND MAINTAINING SOME SEMBLANCE OF A NORMAL LIFE!

Stan Lee PRESENTS: THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN!™


THEY WATCH THE CROW CIRCLE THE MOON, DESCEND TO THE TOP OF THE TOWERING ARCH--AND BECOME A MAN.
THE MAN HOLDS HIS LONGBOW HIGH, LETS FLY A CRY THAT AT ONCE SEEMS A BOAST AND A PRAYER...
...A CRY THAT ECHOES THROUGH THESE VAST CANYONS, GROWS IN POWER, BECOMES AN OCEANIC ROAR.
THIS NIGHT, THAT ROAR SEEMS TO SAY, HAS BEEN CARVED IN STONE FOR CENTURIES. THIS NIGHT HAS JUST BEEN BORN. THIS NIGHT...
...WILL FOREVER ALTER BOTH YOUR LIVES.
EYE of the PUMA
PART TWO:
THE SUMMIT
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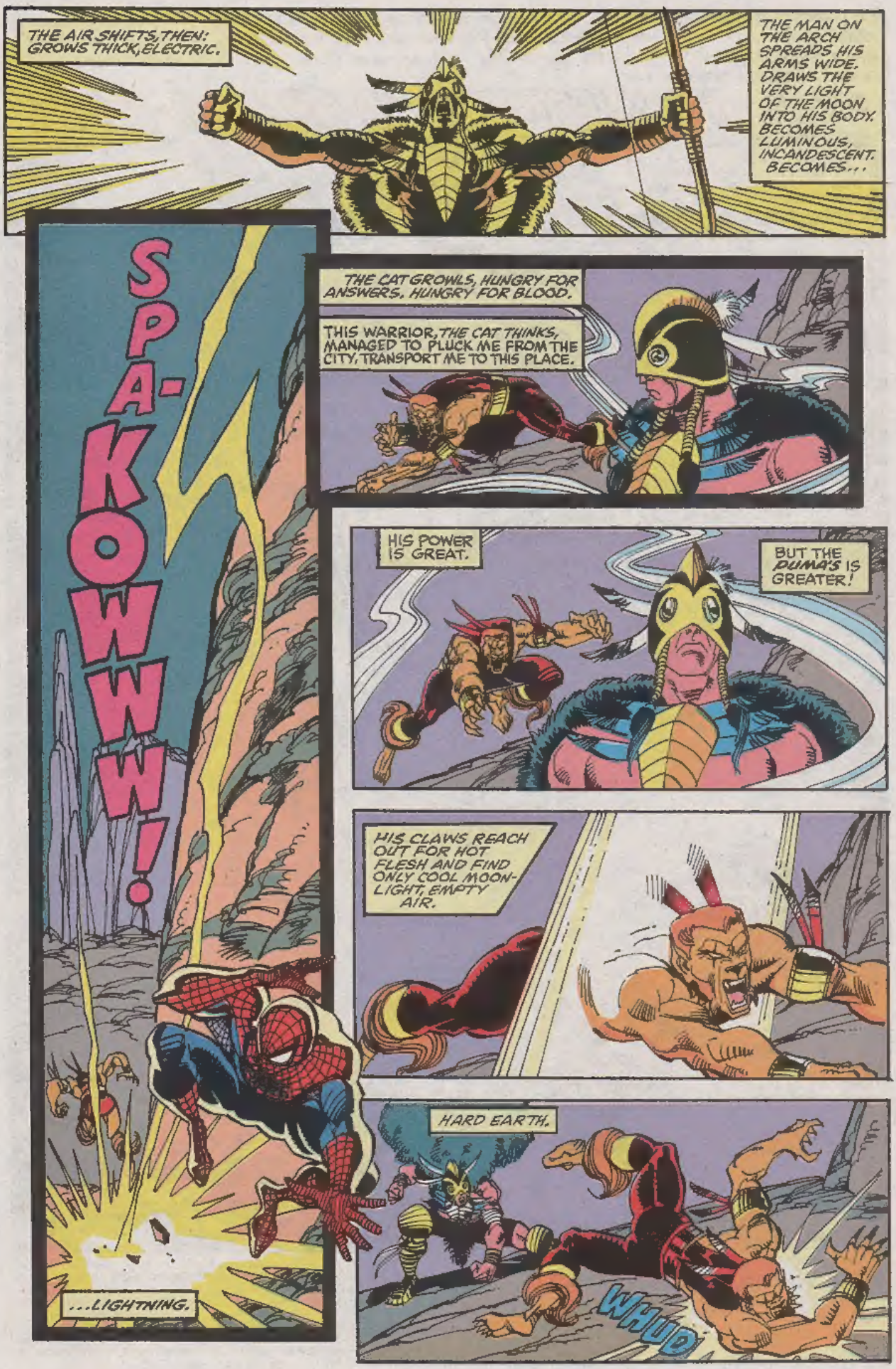
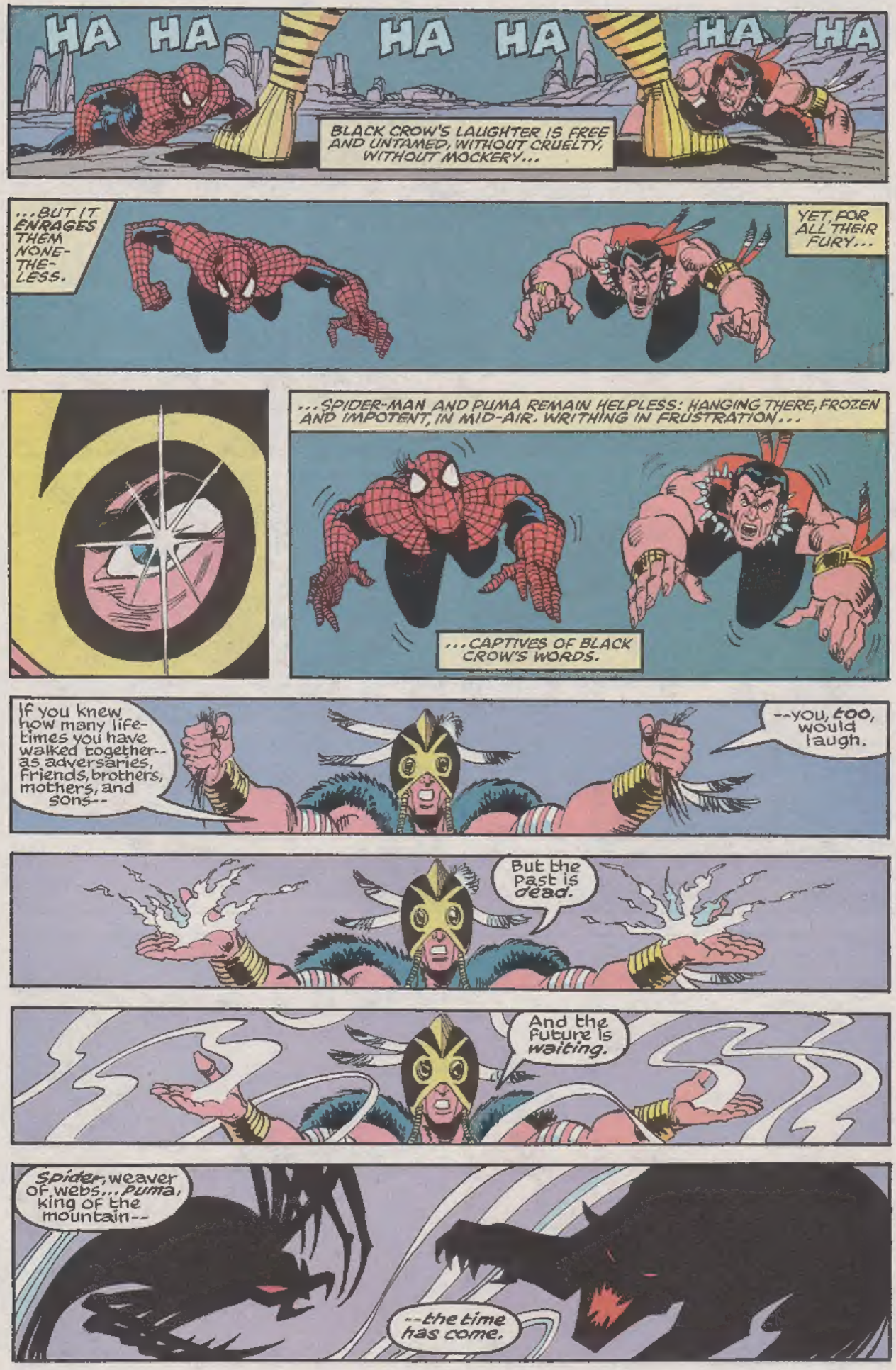
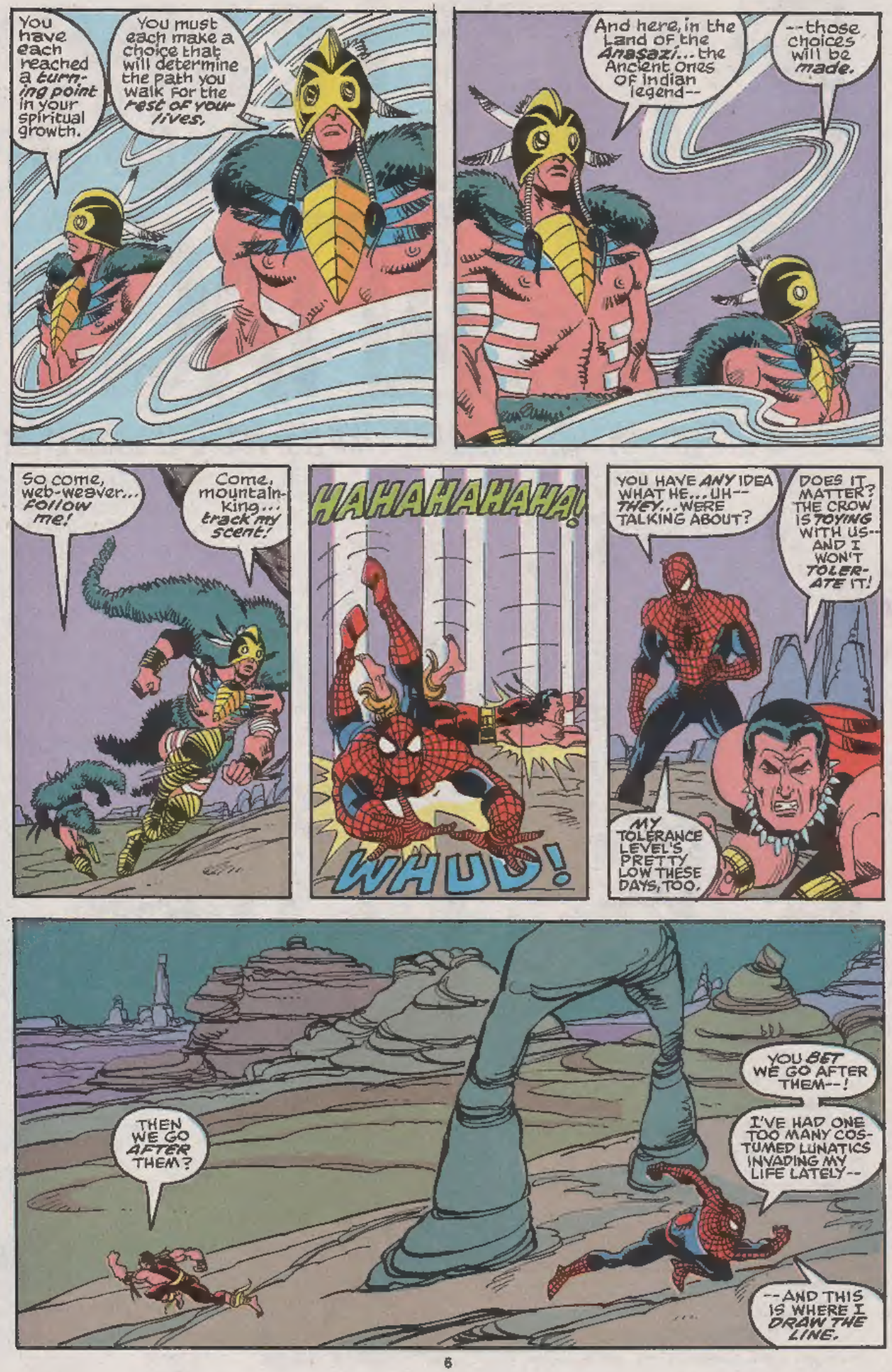
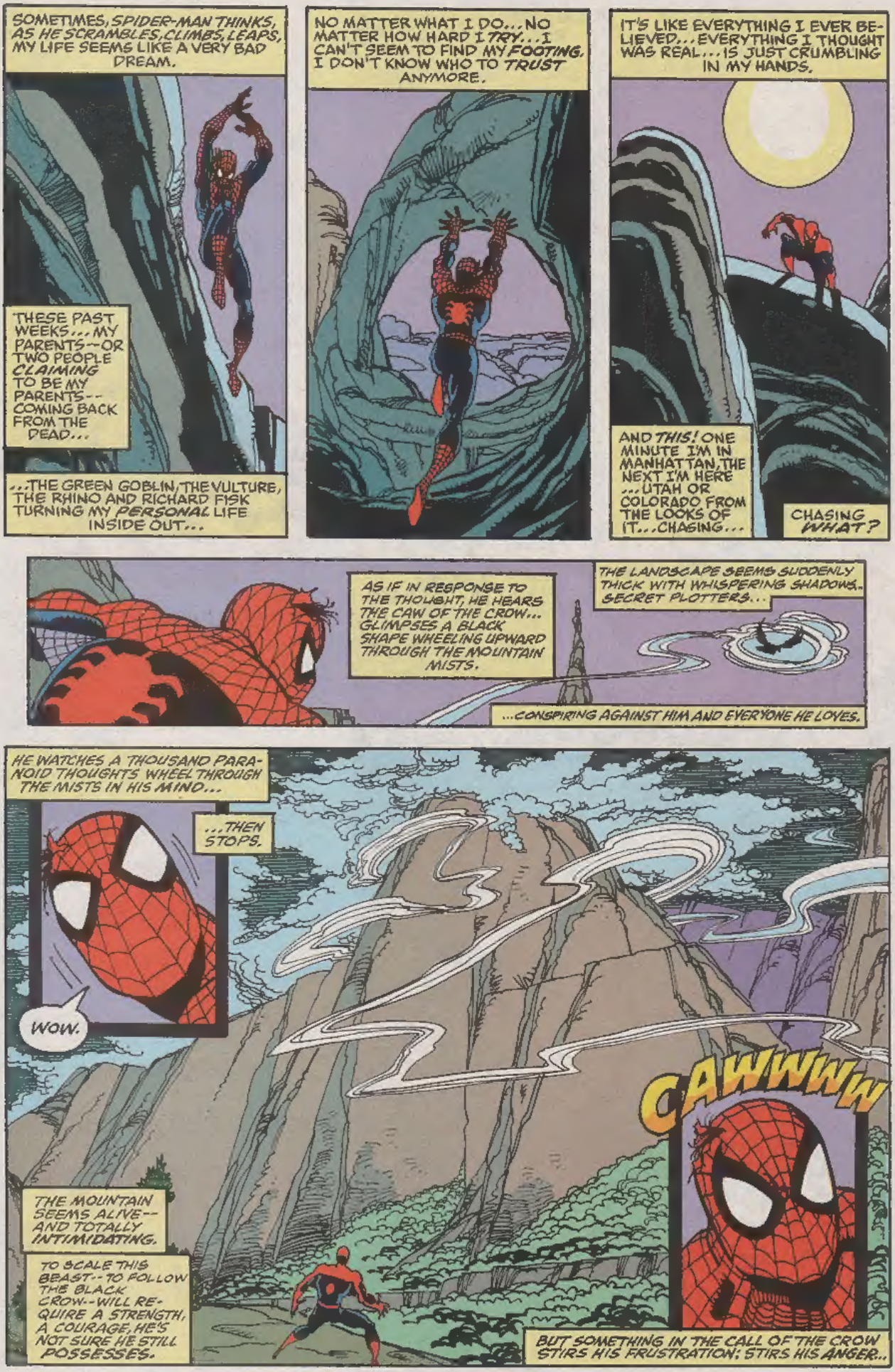

THE AIR SHIFTS, THEN: GROWS THICK, ELECTRIC.
THE MAN ON THE ARCH SPREADS HIS ARMS WIDE. DRAWS THE VERY LIGHT OF THE MOON INTO HIS BODY. BECOMES LUMINOUS, INCANDESCENT. BECOMES...
SPA-KOWWW!
...LIGHTNING.
THE CAT GROWLS, HUNGRY FOR ANSWERS. HUNGRY FOR BLOOD.
THIS WARRIOR, THE CAT THINKS, MANAGED TO PLUCK ME FROM THE CITY, TRANSPORT ME TO THIS PLACE.
HIS POWER IS GREAT.
BUT THE PUMA'S IS GREATER!
HIS CLAWS REACH OUT FOR HOT FLESH AND FIND ONLY COOL MOON-LIGHT, EMPTY AIR.
HARD EARTH.
WHUD

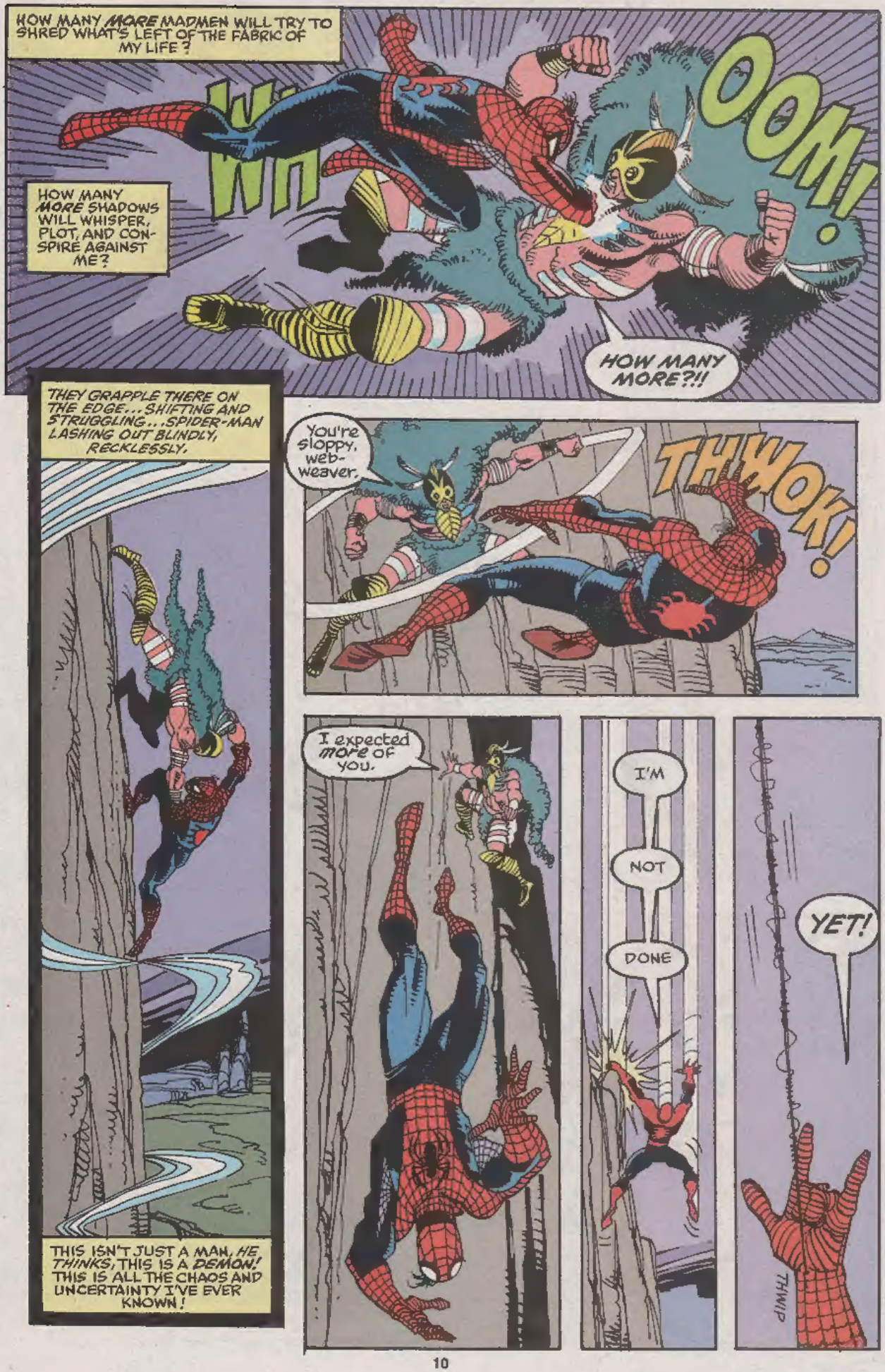
I am Black Crow--and I have come for you!
I serve the will and whim of the Earth Mother. I am the door between Man and the Great Spirit!
I am your destiny!
SHHHKK
AS FAR AS I CAN TELL, YOU'RE JUST SOME NUT WITH A KNIFE--
--AND--WHATEVER THOMAS FIREHEART MAY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST--I'M NOT GOING TO STAND HERE AND LET YOU--
You will do--what the Earth Mother demands of you!
WUPP!
And she demands much of you, Spider-Man!
RRRIPP
The question is--
--do you have the stomach for it?
SHHKK

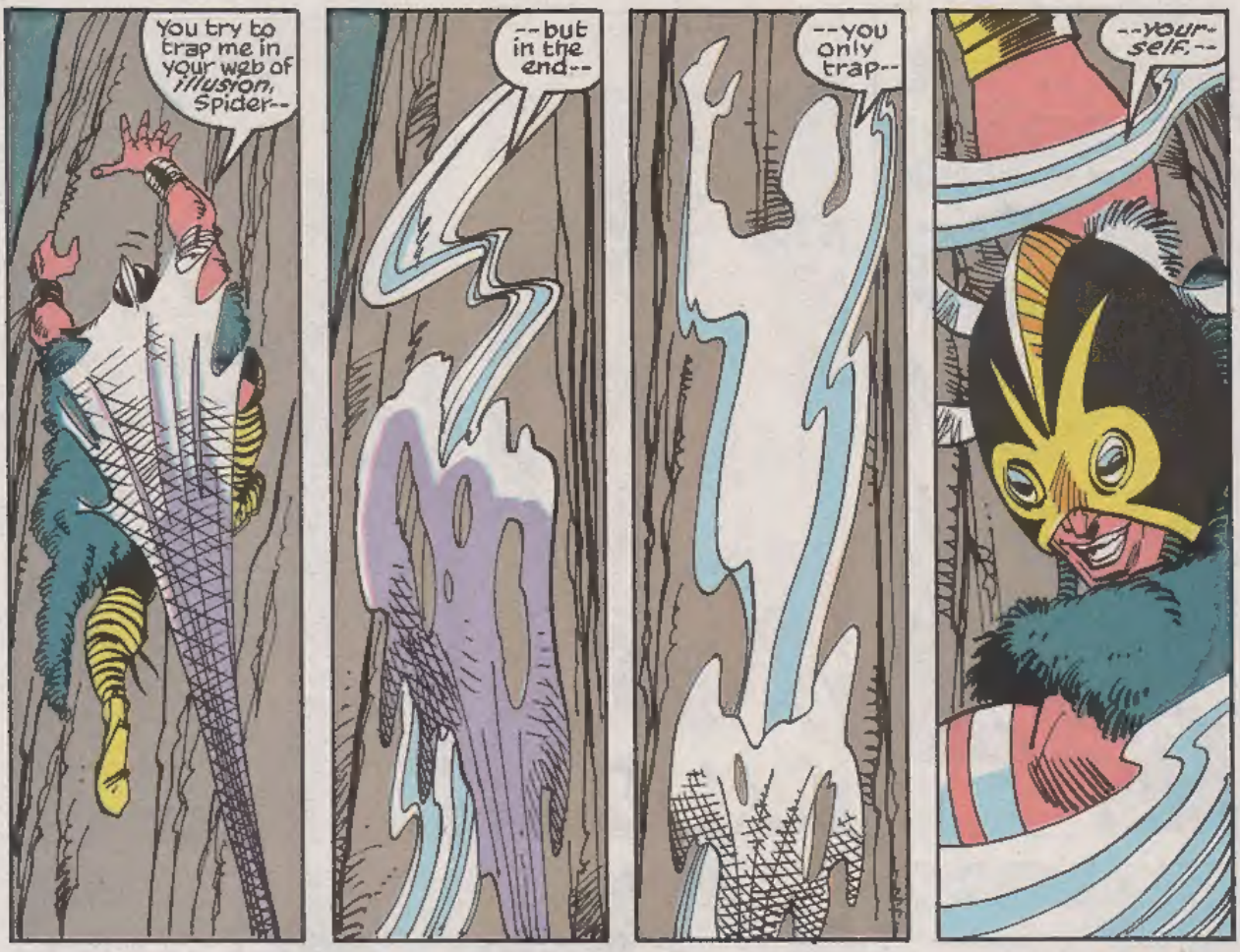

HA HA HA HA HA HA
BLACK CROW'S LAUGHTER IS FREE AND UNTAMED, WITHOUT CRUELTY, WITHOUT MOCKERY...
...BUT IT ENRAGES THEM NONE-THE-LESS.
YET, FOR ALL THEIR FURY...
...SPIDER-MAN AND PUMA REMAIN HELPLESS: HANGING THERE, FROZEN AND IMPOTENT, IN MID-AIR, WRITHING IN FRUSTRATION...
...CAPTIVES OF BLACK CROW'S WORDS.
If you knew how many life-times you have walked together-- as adversaries, friends, brothers, mothers, and sons--
--you, too, would laugh.
But the past is dead.
And the future is waiting.
Spider, weaver of webs... Puma, king of the mountain--
--the time has come.


You have each reached a turning point in your spiritual growth.
You must each make a choice that will determine the path you walk for the rest of your lives.
And here, in the Land of the Anasazi... the Ancient Ones of Indian legend--
--those choices will be made.
So come, web-weaver... follow me!
Come, mountain-king... track my scent!
HAHAHAHAHA!
WHUD!
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT HE... UH-- THEY... WERE TALKING ABOUT?
DOES IT MATTER? THE CROW IS TOYING WITH US-- AND I WON'T TOLERATE IT!
MY TOLERANCE LEVEL'S PRETTY LOW THESE DAYS, TOO.
THEN WE GO AFTER THEM?
YOU BET WE GO AFTER THEM--!
I'VE HAD ONE TOO MANY COSTUMED LUNATICS INVADING MY LIFE LATELY--
--AND THIS IS WHERE I DRAW THE LINE.


SOMETIMES, SPIDER-MAN THINKS, AS HE SCRAMBLES, CLIMBS, LEAPS, MY LIFE SEEMS LIKE A VERY BAD DREAM.
THESE PAST WEEKS... MY PARENTS--OR TWO PEOPLE CLAIMING TO BE MY PARENTS--COMING BACK FROM THE DEAD...
...THE GREEN GOBLIN, THE VULTURE, THE RHINO AND RICHARD FISK TURNING MY PERSONAL LIFE INSIDE OUT...
NO MATTER WHAT I DO... NO MATTER HOW HARD I TRY... I CAN'T SEEM TO FIND MY FOOTING. I DON'T KNOW WHO TO TRUST ANYMORE.
IT'S LIKE EVERYTHING I EVER BELIEVED... EVERYTHING I THOUGHT WAS REAL... IS JUST CRUMBLING IN MY HANDS.
AND THIS! ONE MINUTE I'M IN MANHATTAN, THE NEXT I'M HERE ...UTAH OR COLORADO FROM THE LOOKS OF IT... CHASING...
CHASING WHAT?
AS IF IN RESPONSE TO THE THOUGHT, HE HEARS THE CAW OF THE CROW... GLIMPSES A BLACK SHAPE WHEELING UPWARD THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN MISTS.
THE LANDSCAPE SEEMS SUDDENLY THICK WITH WHISPERING SHADOWS.. SECRET PLOTTERS...
...CONSPIRING AGAINST HIM AND EVERYONE HE LOVES.
HE WATCHES A THOUSAND PARANOID THOUGHTS WHEEL THROUGH THE MISTS IN HIS MIND...
...THEN STOPS.
WOW.
CAWWWW
THE MOUNTAIN SEEMS ALIVE--AND TOTALLY INTIMIDATING.
TO SCALE THIS BEAST--TO FOLLOW THE BLACK CROW--WILL REQUIRE A STRENGTH, A COURAGE, HE'S NOT SURE HE STILL POSSESSES.
BUT SOMETHING IN THE CALL OF THE CROW STIRS HIS FRUSTRATION; STIRS HIS ANGER...

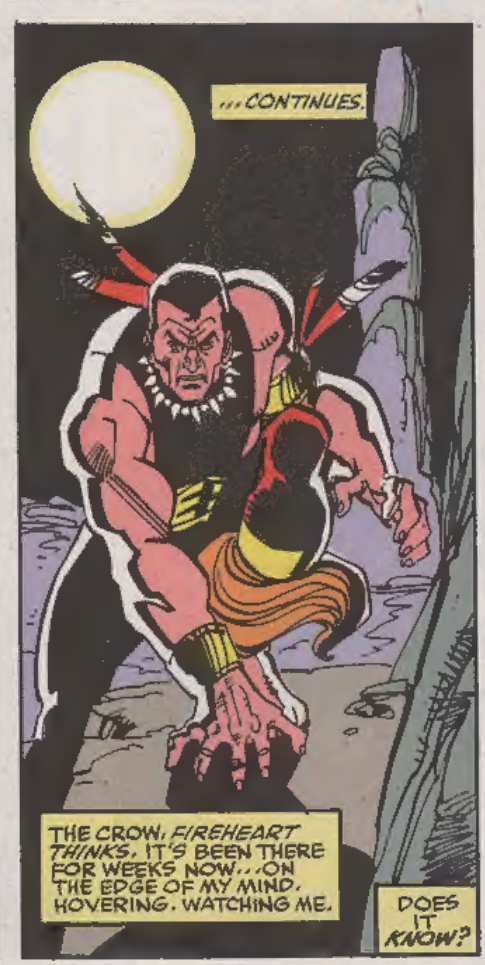
...AND HE ASCENDS.
HE'S SPENT YEARS SCALING THE HEIGHTS OF THE CITY ...CLIMBING HIGH ABOVE THE CONCRETE CANYONS... BUT THIS--
WHAT IS IT ABOUT THIS PLACE, HE WONDERS (THE VIBRATIONS OF THE ROCK BENEATH HIS FINGERS? THE SINGING OF THE WIND? THE MOONLIGHT DANCING THROUGH LAYERS OF FOG?)...
...THAT SEEMS SO UTTERLY UNREAL--AS IF THIS EXTRAORDINARY LANDSCAPE ISN'T A PART OF THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE AT ALL...
...BUT A MANIFESTATION OF SOMETHING ELSE, SOMETHING BEYOND THE WORLD WE PERCEIVE WITH OUR SENSES.
HE LAUGHS AT HIMSELF FOR EVEN CONSIDERING SUCH THOUGHTS. METAPHYSICS AREN'T HIS SPECIALTY. HE'S A PRACTICAL MAN. HE BELIEVES IN WHAT HE CAN TOUCH, TASTE...
WHAM
...FEEL.
NO WARNING FROM HIS SPIDER-SENSE, HIS FINGERTIPS RIPPED FROM THE ROCK. WHO IS THIS BLACK CROW? HIS THOUGHTS SCREAM.
ANOTHER GOBLIN, ANOTHER VULTURE, ANOTHER RHINO, ANOTHER FISK?


HOW MANY MORE MADMEN WILL TRY TO SHRED WHAT'S LEFT OF THE FABRIC OF MY LIFE?
HOW MANY MORE SHADOWS WILL WHISPER, PLOT, AND CONSPIRE AGAINST ME?
OOM!
HOW MANY MORE?!!
THEY GRAPPLE THERE ON THE EDGE... SHIFTING AND STRUGGLING... SPIDER-MAN LASHING OUT BLINDLY, RECKLESSLY.
You're sloppy, web-weaver.
THWOK!
I expected more of you.
I'M
NOT
DONE
YET!
THWIP
THIS ISN'T JUST A MAN, HE THINKS, THIS IS A DEMON! THIS IS ALL THE CHAOS AND UNCERTAINTY I'VE EVER KNOWN!

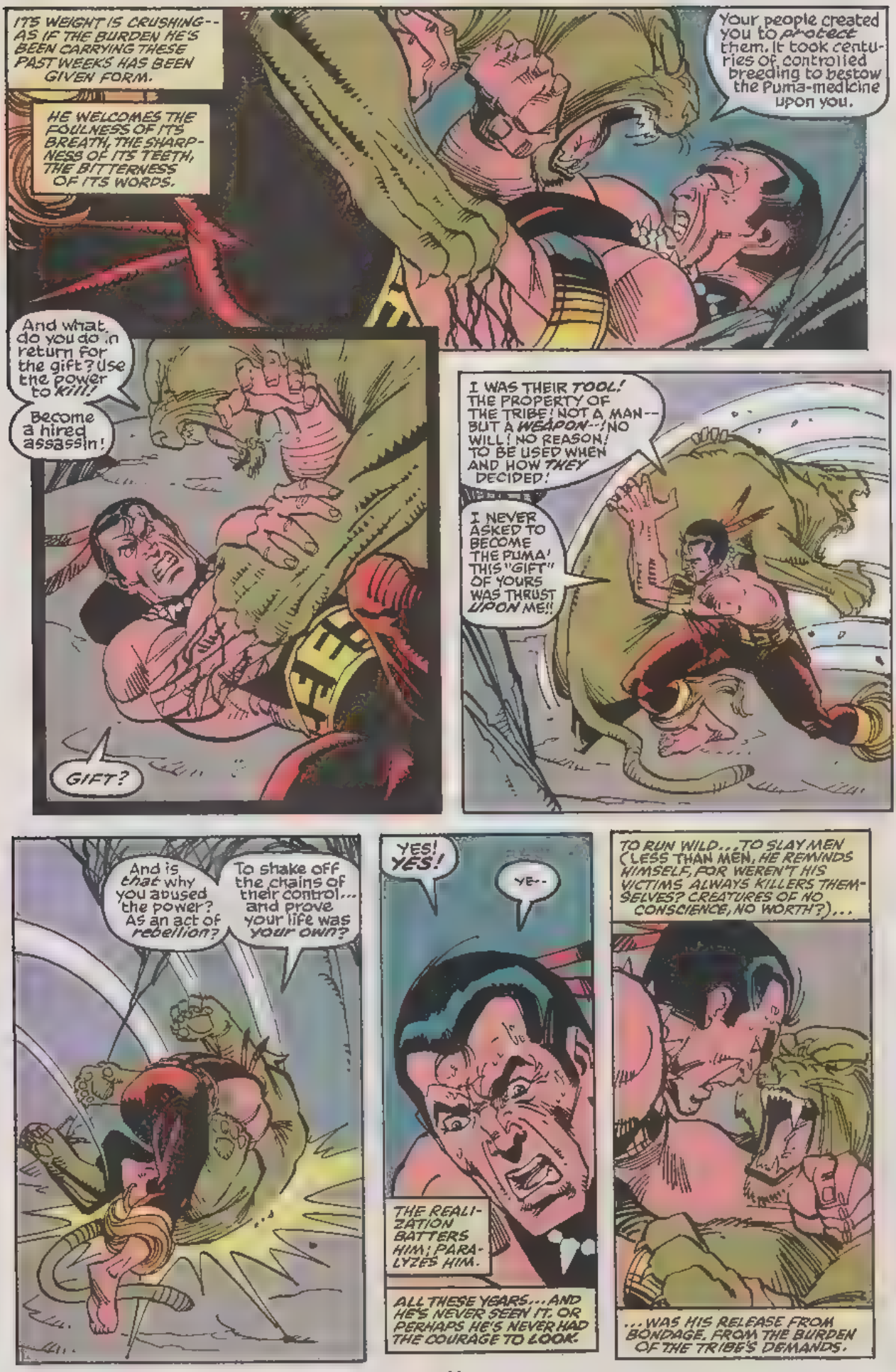

You try to trap me in your web of illusion, Spider--
--but in the end--
--you only trap--
--your-self.--

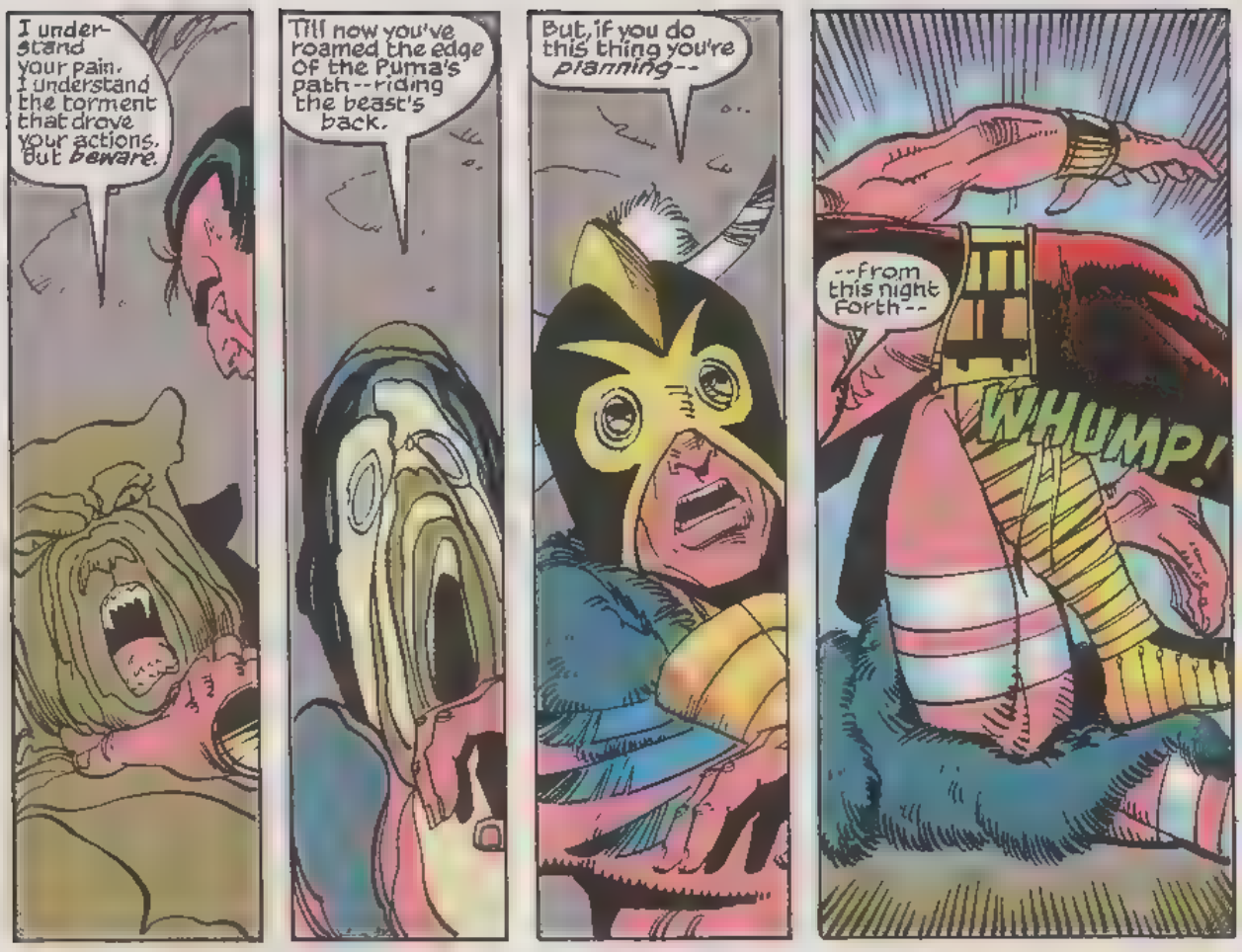
HAHAHAHA!!
THE "DEMON" CLAMBERS UP OUT OF SIGHT. THE SHADOWS WHISPER, TAUNT, AND PLOT. THE RAGE IN SPIDER-MAN'S HEART GROWS HOTTER.

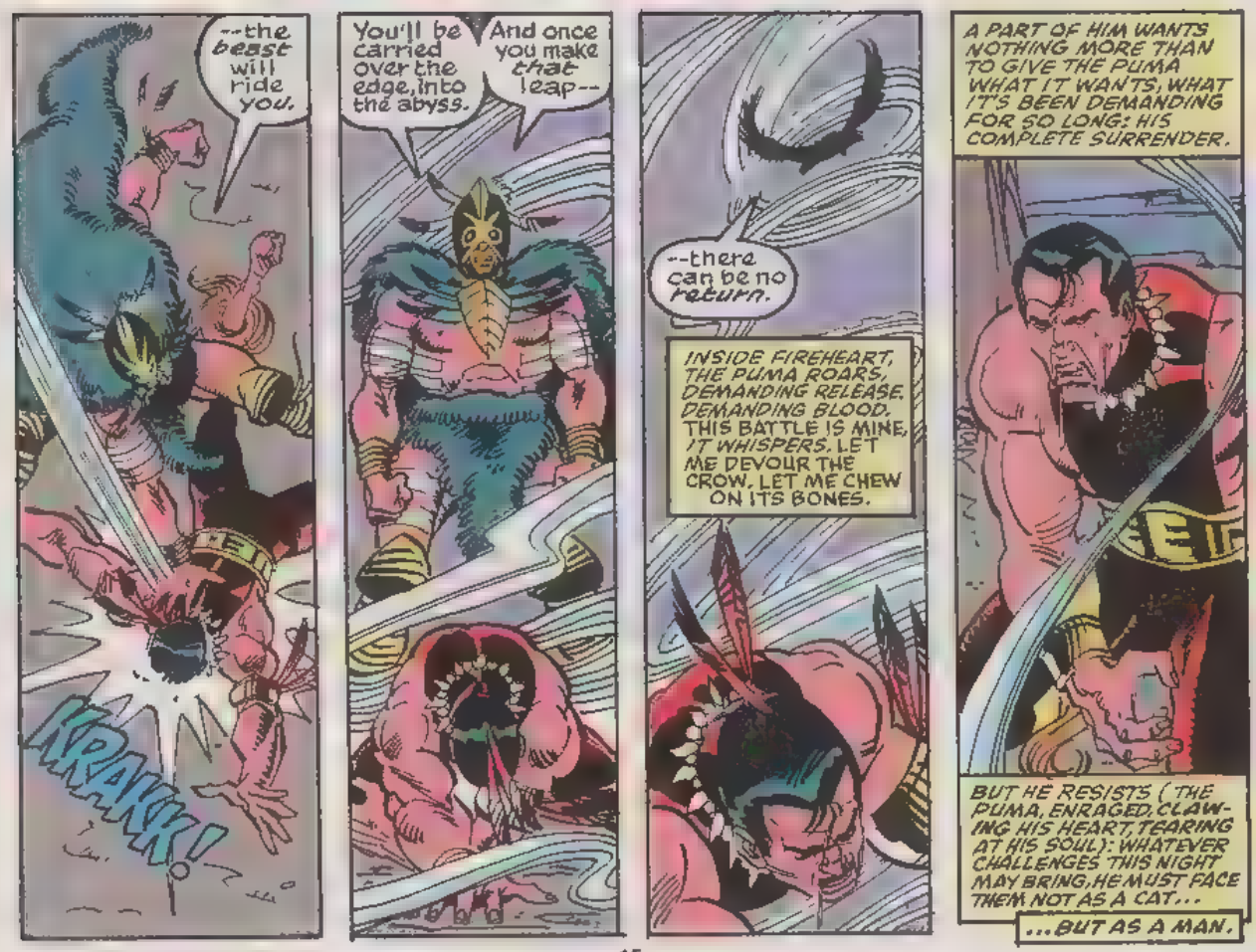
THE ASCENSION...

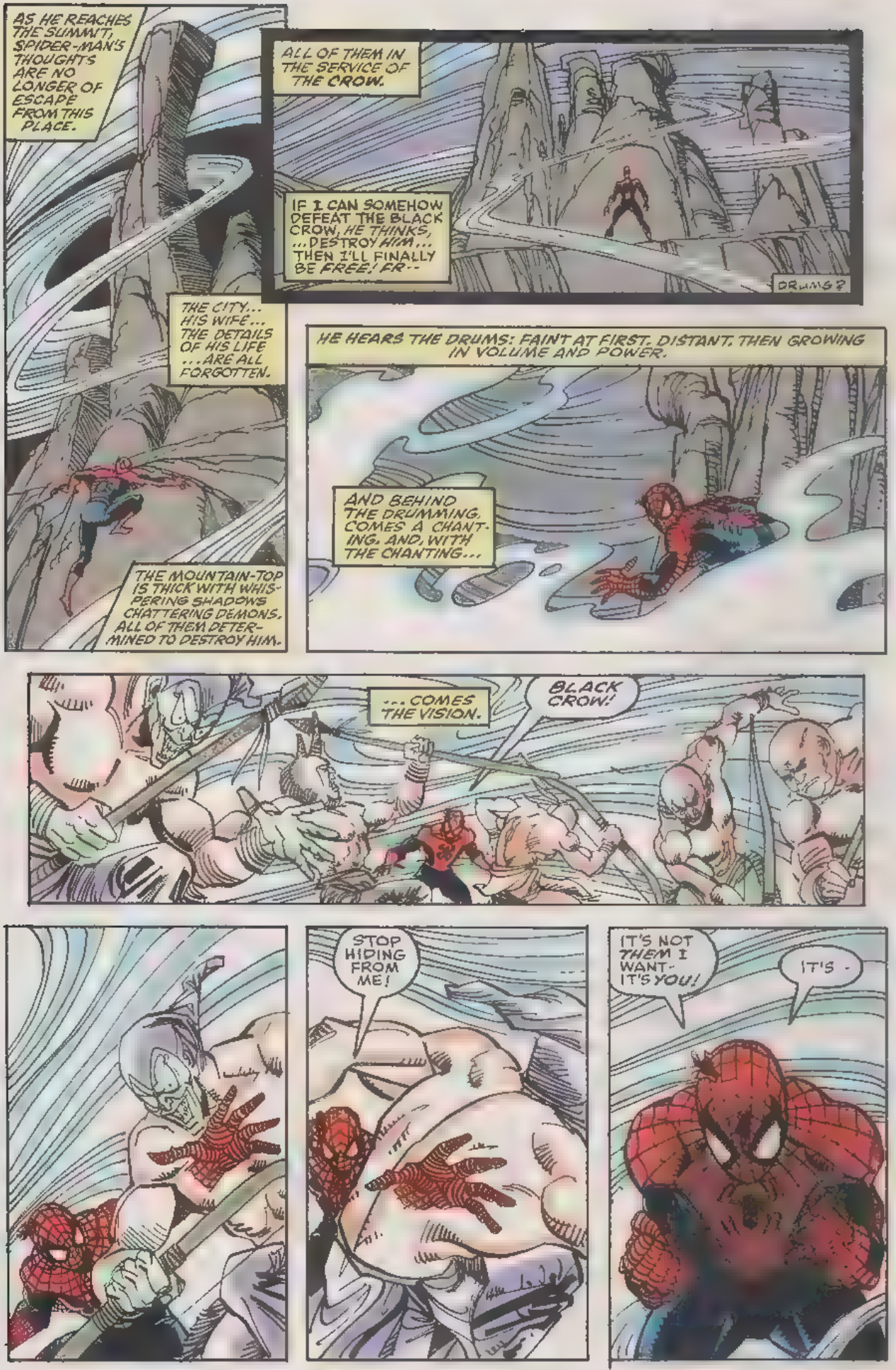

...CONTINUES.
THE CROW, FIREHEART THINKS, IT'S BEEN THERE FOR WEEKS NOW...ON THE EDGE OF MY MIND. HOVERING. WATCHING ME.
DOES IT KNOW?

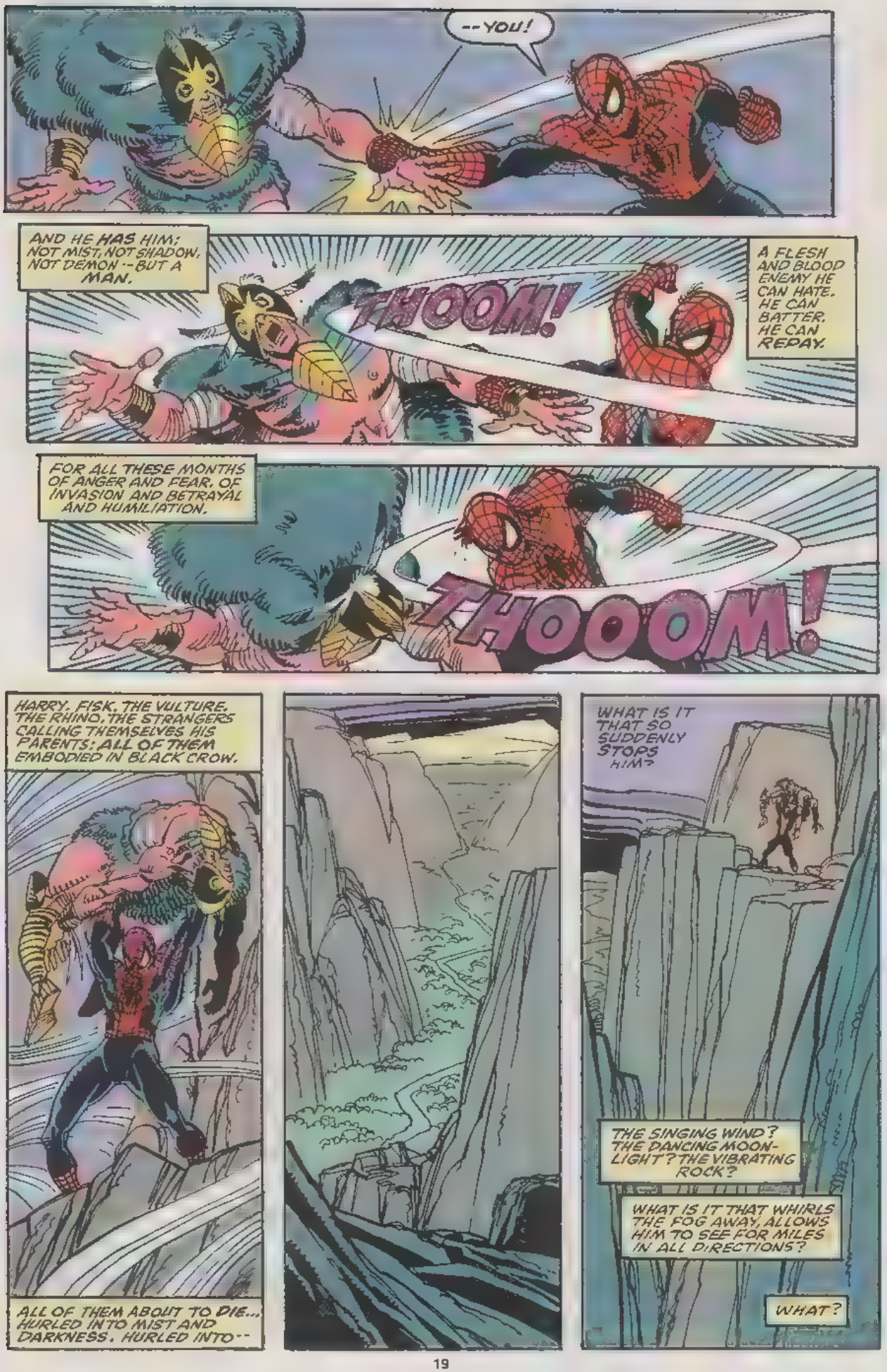
IF THIS IS THE LEGENDARY BLACK CROW...THEN THERE'S NO LIMIT TO HIS KNOWLEDGE. HE CAN GAZE INTO THE DEPTHS OF MY SOUL...
...SEE THE AWFUL SECRETS HIDDEN THERE.
IS THAT WHY HE'S COME? TO PASS JUDGEMENT ON ME? IS THAT WHY HE'S...
GGROWWRR
I have come not to judge you, Fireheart--but to help you judge yourself.
The mountain lion medicine you have so long controlled--has risen up to control you.
Tonight you must choose, Fireheart--
Will you be the servant of this great medicine...or its master?
Will your destiny be to save your people--
--or simply to shame them?
SHAME. IT RUSHES THROUGH HIM, HOT AND NUMBING. SO OVERWHELMING THAT HE DOESN'T EVEN RESIST THE CAT'S ATTACK.

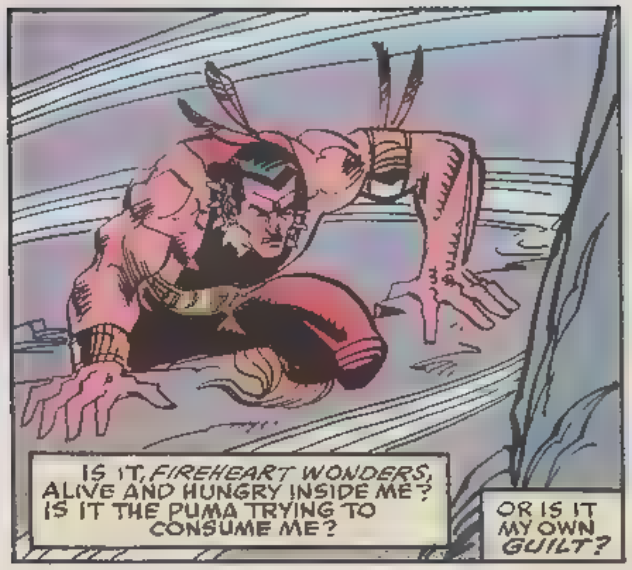

ITS WEIGHT IS CRUSHING--AS IF THE BURDEN HE'S BEEN CARRYING THESE PAST WEEKS HAS BEEN GIVEN FORM.
HE WELCOMES THE FOULNESS OF ITS BREATH, THE SHARPNESS OF ITS TEETH, THE BITTERNESS OF ITS WORDS.
Your people created you to *protect* them. It took centuries of controlled breeding to bestow the Puma-medicine upon you.
And what do you do in return for the gift? Use the power to *kill!*
Become a hired assassin!
GIFT?
I WAS THEIR *TOOL!* THE PROPERTY OF THE TRIBE! NOT A MAN--BUT A *WEAPON*--! NO WILL! NO REASON! TO BE USED WHEN AND HOW *THEY* DECIDED!
I NEVER ASKED TO BECOME THE PUMA! THIS "GIFT" OF YOURS WAS THRUST *UPON* ME!!
And is *that* why you abused the power? As an act of *rebellion?*
To shake off the chains of their control... and prove your life was *your own?*
YES! *YES!*
YE--
THE REALIZATION BATTERS HIM; PARALYZES HIM.
ALL THESE YEARS... AND HE'S NEVER SEEN IT. OR PERHAPS HE'S NEVER HAD THE COURAGE TO LOOK.
TO RUN WILD... TO SLAY MEN (LESS THAN MEN, HE REMINDS HIMSELF, FOR WEREN'T HIS VICTIMS ALWAYS KILLERS THEMSELVES? CREATURES OF NO CONSCIENCE, NO WORTH?)...
...WAS HIS RELEASE FROM BONDAGE. FROM THE BURDEN OF THE TRIBE'S DEMANDS.

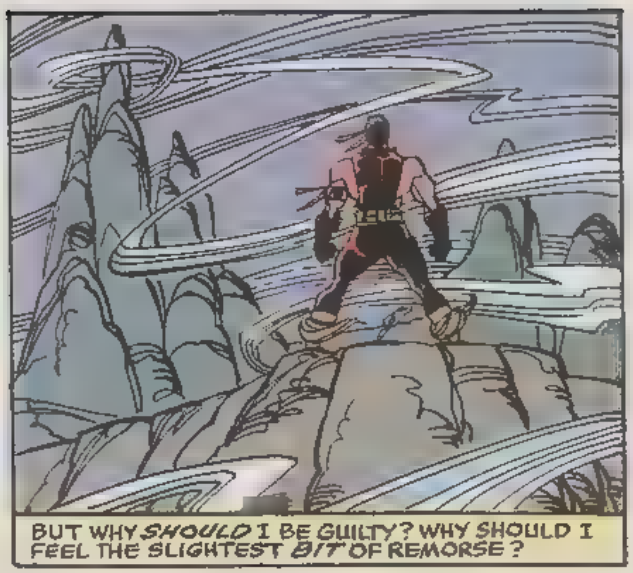

I understand your pain. I understand the torment that drove your actions. But beware.
Till now you've roamed the edge of the Puma's path--riding the beast's back.
But, if you do this thing you're planning--
--From this night forth--
WHUMP!

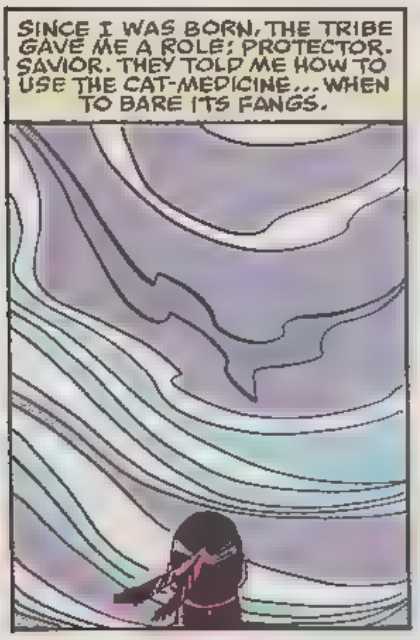

--the beast will ride you.
KRAKK!
You'll be carried over the edge, into the abyss.
And once you make that leap--
--there can be no return.
INSIDE FIREHEART, THE PUMA ROARS, DEMANDING RELEASE. DEMANDING BLOOD. THIS BATTLE IS MINE, IT WHISPERS. LET ME DEVOUR THE CROW. LET ME CHEW ON ITS BONES.
A PART OF HIM WANTS NOTHING MORE THAN TO GIVE THE PUMA WHAT IT WANTS, WHAT IT'S BEEN DEMANDING FOR SO LONG: HIS COMPLETE SURRENDER.
BUT HE RESISTS (THE PUMA, ENRAGED, CLAWING HIS HEART, TEARING AT HIS SOUL): WHATEVER CHALLENGES THIS NIGHT MAY BRING, HE MUST FACE THEM NOT AS A CAT...
...BUT AS A MAN.

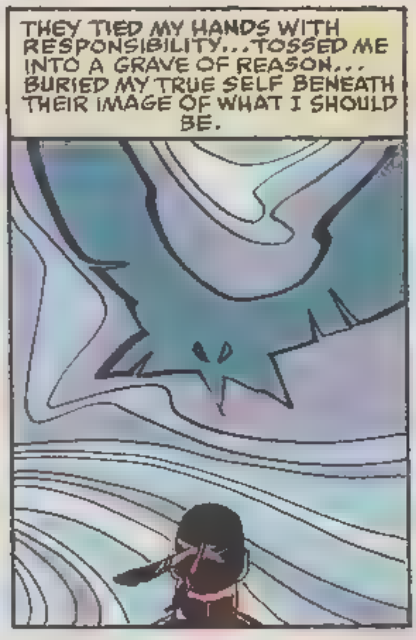

AS HE REACHES THE SUMMIT, SPIDER-MAN'S THOUGHTS ARE NO LONGER OF ESCAPE FROM THIS PLACE.
ALL OF THEM IN THE SERVICE OF THE CROW.
IF I CAN SOMEHOW DEFEAT THE BLACK CROW, HE THINKS, ...DESTROY HIM... THEN I'LL FINALLY BE FREE! ER--
DRUMS?
THE CITY... HIS WIFE... THE DETAILS OF HIS LIFE ...ARE ALL FORGOTTEN.
THE MOUNTAIN-TOP IS THICK WITH WHISPERING SHADOWS CHATTERING DEMONS, ALL OF THEM DETERMINED TO DESTROY HIM.
HE HEARS THE DRUMS: FAINT AT FIRST. DISTANT. THEN GROWING IN VOLUME AND POWER.
AND BEHIND THE DRUMMING, COMES A CHANTING. AND, WITH THE CHANTING...
...COMES THE VISION.
BLACK CROW!
STOP HIDING FROM ME!
IT'S NOT THEM I WANT- IT'S YOU!
IT'S -

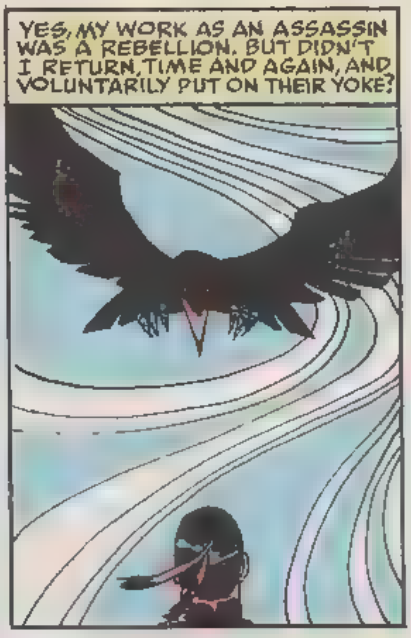

--YOU!
AND HE HAS HIM; NOT MIST, NOT SHADOW, NOT DEMON--BUT A MAN.
THOOM!
A FLESH AND BLOOD ENEMY HE CAN HATE. HE CAN BATTER. HE CAN REPAY.
FOR ALL THESE MONTHS OF ANGER AND FEAR, OF INVASION AND BETRAYAL AND HUMILIATION.
THOOOM!
HARRY. FISK. THE VULTURE. THE RHINO. THE STRANGERS CALLING THEMSELVES HIS PARENTS; ALL OF THEM EMBODIED IN BLACK CROW.
ALL OF THEM ABOUT TO DIE... HURLED INTO MIST AND DARKNESS. HURLED INTO--
WHAT IS IT THAT SO SUDDENLY STOPS HIM?
THE SINGING WIND? THE DANCING MOONLIGHT? THE VIBRATING ROCK?
WHAT IS IT THAT WHIRLS THE FOG AWAY, ALLOWS HIM TO SEE FOR MILES IN ALL DIRECTIONS?
WHAT?

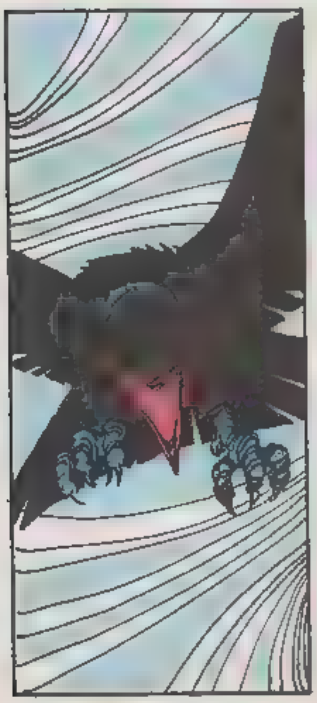

IS IT, FIREHEART WONDERS, ALIVE AND HUNGRY INSIDE ME? IS IT THE PUMA TRYING TO CONSUME ME?
OR IS IT MY OWN GUILT?


BUT WHY SHOULD I BE GUILTY? WHY SHOULD I FEEL THE SLIGHTEST BIT OF REMORSE?


SINCE I WAS BORN, THE TRIBE GAVE ME A ROLE: PROTECTOR. SAVIOR. THEY TOLD ME HOW TO USE THE CAT-MEDICINE... WHEN TO BARE ITS FANGS.


THEY TIED MY HANDS WITH RESPONSIBILITY... TOSSED ME INTO A GRAVE OF REASON... BURIED MY TRUE SELF BENEATH THEIR IMAGE OF WHAT I SHOULD BE.


YES, MY WORK AS AN ASSASSIN WAS A REBELLION. BUT DIDN'T I RETURN, TIME AND AGAIN, AND VOLUNTARILY PUT ON THEIR YOKE?



"IF YOU DO WHAT YOU'RE PLANNING," THE CROW SAID, "YOU'LL BE CARRIED OVER THE EDGE."

BUT HE WAS WRONG, I DON'T INTEND TO BE CARRIED.

KRAAKK
I
INTEND
TO

LEAP!!
HE HAS BROKEN THE CHAINS OF DUTY, SHATTERED THE YOKE OF CONSCIENCE, CLAWED HIS WAY UP, OUT OF THE GRAVE OF JUDGEMENT.
THAT WHICH HE HELD ON SO TIGHT A REIN...
IS
NOW
FREE
ROWRRR
AND HE SEES AT LAST: THIS GREAT CAT IS NO OTHER... NO SEPARATE SELF... FIGHTING FOR CONTROL OF HIS LIFE.
SHRAKKK
GRRRRRRRROWRRR
CHAKKKKKK
THIS IS WHO HE IS!
PUMA, THE HUNTER
PUMA, THE ASSASSIN.

PUMA...
GARRROOOOOOO
...THE BEAST.
THE STARS!
THE VALLEY!
THE MOUNTAINS!
THE WHOLE CREATION SEEMS SUDDENLY SPREAD OUT BEFORE HIM.
HE CAN'T MOVE, CAN'T THINK, CAN HARDLY BREATHE. ALL HE CAN DO IS GAZE IN ABSOLUTE WONDER...

BULLPEN BULLETINS

MARVEL COMICS

STAN'S SOAPBOX

Hi, Heroes!

Take warning! Today's tantalizing little treatise is gonna be one big, unblushing, unabashed plug! Much as I try not to sully the cultural purity of this prize-winning column (No lie! I awarded myself a no-prize only last week), I can hold back no longer! The time has come to shamelessly huckster one of the greatest projects Marvel has ever offered the pantin' public.

I had no intention of writing about it this month — but then I saw some pages! I tell you true, they blew me away! The artwork! The action! The characters! The stories. They represent the peak of superhero excitement! And these are just the first issues! Just imagine what'll happen when we begin to figure out what the heck we're doing!

But none of this humongous hype will mean anything if I don't tell you the name of the mags that have me semi-delirious! Although, chances are you've already guessed what I'm leading up to in my carefully restrained, low-key way! All of comicdom has been wondering and whispering about Marvel's long-awaited 100-year leap into the next century of superhero sagas — the daring new series which spans ten dangerous decades in order to bring us to a breathtakingly new and startling world — a world of the horrible and the heroic, the weird and the wonderful, the violent and the valorous — in short, the totally awesome, mind-staggering world of — MARVEL 2099!

Best of all, the world of one hundred years from now is still an integral part of the famed Marvel Universe! For, in MARVEL 2099 you'll meet the SPIDER-MAN of the future, the PUNISHER of the future, the DR. DOOM of the future, and the one new character who is destined to take his place among the most dazzling stars in our literary firmament — RAVAGE! Man Without Mercy!

I've seen the artwork! I've read the scripts! I've shared the excitement racing madly through the Bullpen and I tell you this — there has never been a new comicbook project more eagerly awaited or more passionately created! SPIDER-MAN 2099! PUNISHER 2099! DR. DOOM 2099! And they're only the beginning! Yes, MARVEL 2099 may well be the most sensational new series of the next ten decades!

Okay! I warned you that this would be an unadulterated plug! But it wasn't written just to sell a few extra copies; matter of fact the mags aren't even available yet! It was written to alert you, as one friend to another, when they do go on sale, don't let a single copy of the MARVEL 2099 series slip away, because this is a golden opportunity, for you and us together, to be in at the start of a legend!

Excelsior

Stan

Stan Lee

"TAKE ME OUT TO THE COMIC BOOK SHOP!" This is a familiar cry that rings out every year at about this time. School's out, the weather is hot, and children of all ages and shoe sizes are looking for new ways to enjoy the new national pastime — comic books! All across the nation, eager readers are keeping their eye firmly on the comic racks, choking up on their wallets, ready to take a swing at a new series, hoping for a home run. Truly it is a joyous time for all!

There was plenty of joy in Marvelville this past April, as the Marvel editorial all-stars took off a few rainy days in April for the warmer climes of California. The line-up looked like this: **Stan Lee**, who is the Abner Doubleday of Marvel, Manager **Tom DeFalco**, Benchwarmer **Mark Gruenwald**, Outfielder **Carl Potts**, Switch-hitter **Fabian Nicieza**, Shortstop **Bobbie Chase**, and Star Rookie **Hildy Mesnik**. The Marvel boys 'n girls of summer were in California to round the promotional bases, and actually wound up performing something of a double-header.

They first stepped up to the plate in Oakland where they threw out the first ball at a local comics convention. If the roar of the crowd was any indication, the Marvel madmen scored quite a hit with their "exhibition games." Among other hair-raising heroics, Tom D. performed his famous "popping a balloon by sitting on it" trick, Bobbie Chase juggled unjuggleable garments, Mark demonstrated his face's affinity for shaving cream pies, and Fabian caught M&M's in his mouth. A talent scout was heard to remark that "Fabian has a good eye. I'm not crazy about his nose, but the kid has a good eye." The convention featured all these Marvel madmen playing their best game; everyone gave 110%. As one spectator noted at the time, "They really came here to play ... with the possible exception of DeFalco, who may have come just for the promise of free peanuts and crackerjacks!"

The Marvelballers carried their winning streak over to **George Lucas**'s special effects company, Industrial Light and Magic, located at a secret location in _____, California. Although Tom's titans didn't have the home field advantage, they still came through like champions. At ILM, DeFalco's dreadnaughts presented an hour and a half talk about Marvel as part of ILM's guest-lecture series. The speech went over like a grand slam, with the Marvel team committing only a few errors. (Fortunately for all, the speech did not go into extra innings.)

Having completed this double play of shmoozing, the Marvel team headed for home. Back at our own field of comic book dreams, the Marvel bullpen was treated to visits by a few famous heavy-hitters. These illustrious guests were not sluggers — rather, they were musicians. First up was half of the famous **Kid 'n Play** rap team — none other than Hall of Famer, **Kid**! Kid was a good sport ... you could say he really came to play. (Unfortunately, Play didn't come to *kid*.) Kid really did stop by — would we kid you about a thing like that?

Hot new heavy metal group **War Babies** also dropped by the bullpen, to witness our hardworking team as we went through spring training. Fans of hard-rockin' music should check out the War Babies new album — these guys may never play the National Anthem at Yankee Stadium, but their music is ready for the major leagues.

As we complete the seventh inning stretch of this Bullpen page, we are somehow put in the mind of ... baseball. This is probably as good a time as any to check in with the Marvel softball team, the Punishers. This grim and gritty team, whose uniforms feature glow-in-the-dark gatefold holograms, lost their first game against local TV station WNET. Still, the Punishers put up a good fight, much like the fictional Punisher in pursuit of some perpetrators, keeping it competitive at 12-8. Team managers this year are managing editor "Diamond" **David Wohl** and editor **Rob** "The Babe" **Tokar**.

At the time of this writing, the Marvel team was gearing up for the first of three big games against uptown archrivals DC. After the way we humiliated the DC Batmen last year, it should be interesting to see what happens when the Batmen Return. (Sure, they can get multi-million dollar movies made, but can they compete where it really counts — on the softball field?)

And, in the field of television, one show which is sure to slide into first place soon is the syndicated **Dennis Miller** Show. Dennis did some colorful commentary about Marvel Comics of the late sixties on a recent episode of his late night talk-fest. It seems Dennis was a bigtime Marvelold in his bush league days. Thanks for going to bat for us, Dennis! You can be our designated talk show host any time!

Looks like Mighty Marvel has not struck out with the fans this year. If our winning streak continues, we may make it all the way to the World Series of Comics! So until next time, remember — it ain't over till the Kingpin sings!

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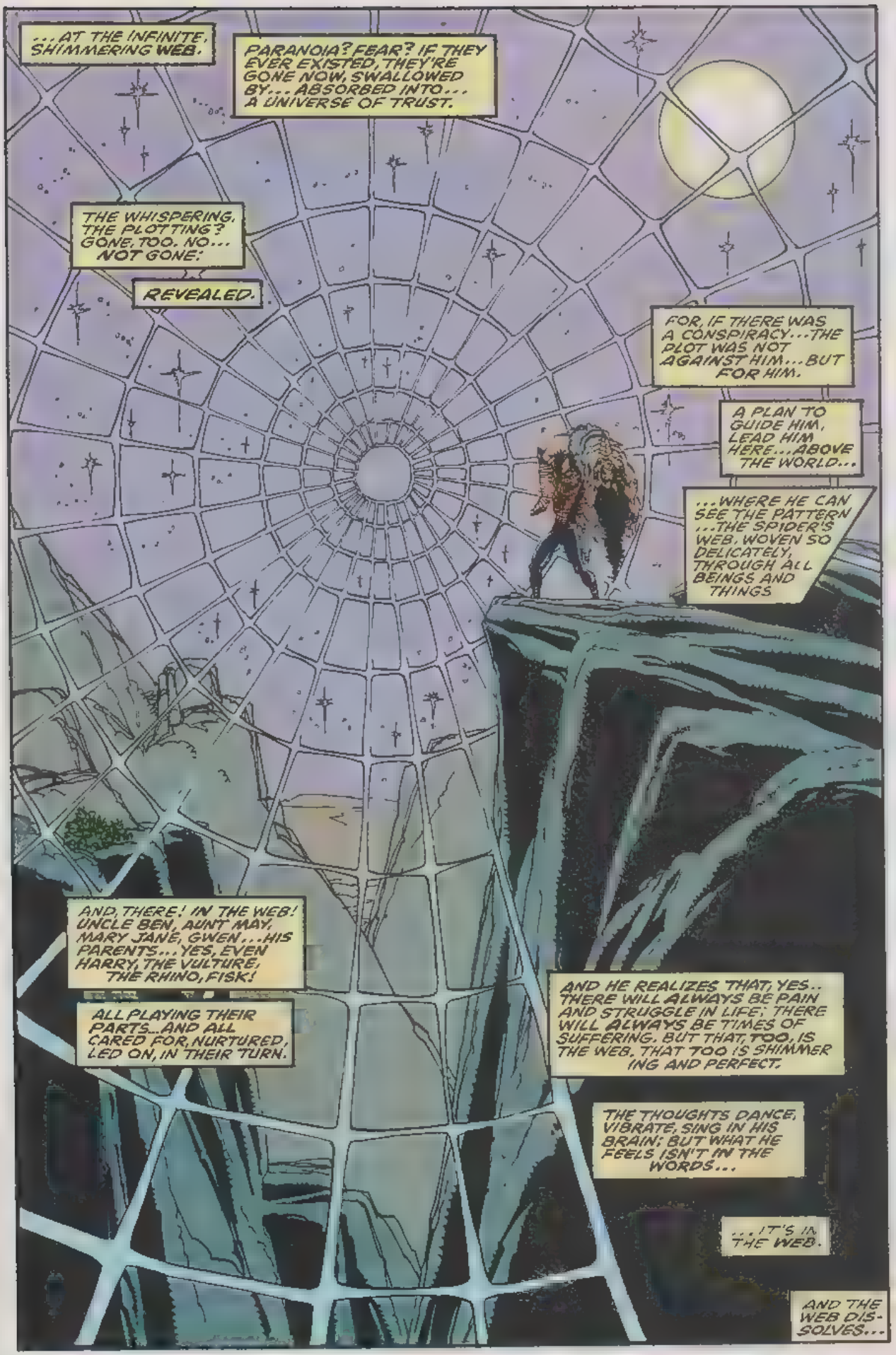
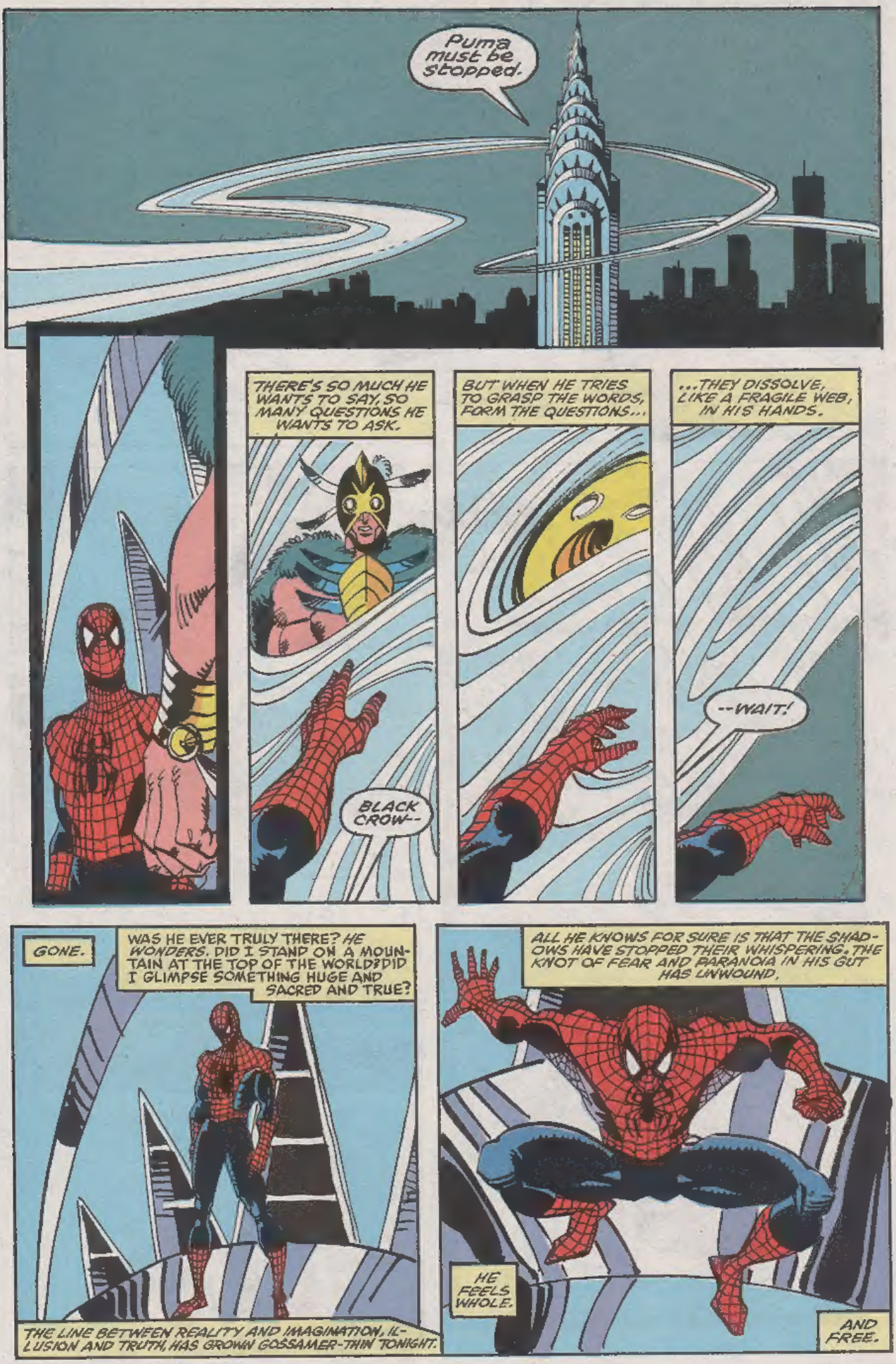
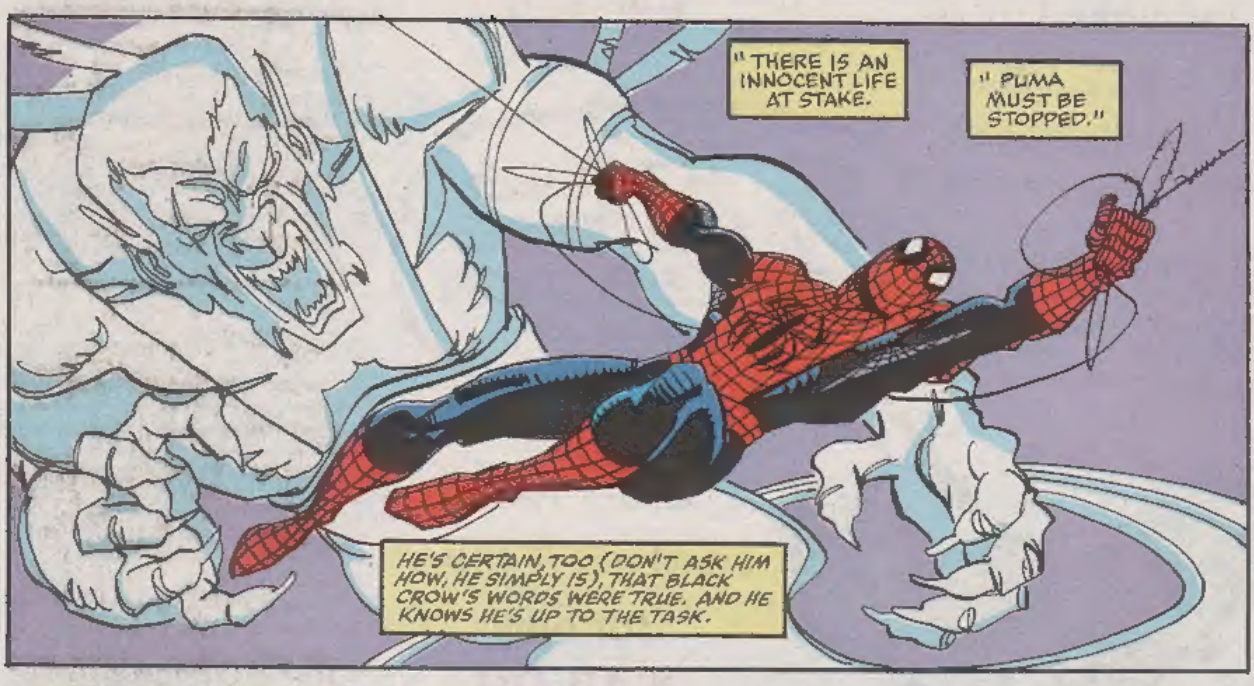
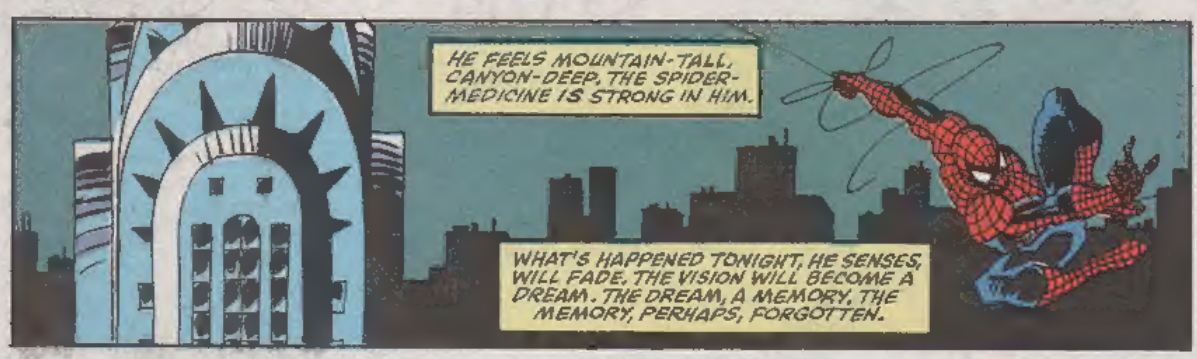

...AT THE INFINITE, SHIMMERING WEB.
PARANOIA? FEAR? IF THEY EVER EXISTED, THEY'RE GONE NOW, SWALLOWED BY... ABSORBED INTO... A UNIVERSE OF TRUST.
THE WHISPERING, THE PLOTTING? GONE, TOO. NO... NOT GONE:
REVEALED.
FOR, IF THERE WAS A CONSPIRACY...THE PLOT WAS NOT AGAINST HIM...BUT FOR HIM.
A PLAN TO GUIDE HIM, LEAD HIM HERE...ABOVE THE WORLD...
...WHERE HE CAN SEE THE PATTERN ...THE SPIDER'S WEB, WOVEN SO DELICATELY, THROUGH ALL BEINGS AND THINGS
AND, THERE! IN THE WEB! UNCLE BEN, AUNT MAY, MARY JANE, GWEN...HIS PARENTS... YES, EVEN HARRY, THE VULTURE, THE RHINO, FISK!
ALL PLAYING THEIR PARTS...AND ALL CARED FOR, NURTURED, LED ON, IN THEIR TURN.
AND HE REALIZES THAT, YES.. THERE WILL ALWAYS BE PAIN AND STRUGGLE IN LIFE; THERE WILL ALWAYS BE TIMES OF SUFFERING. BUT THAT, TOO, IS THE WEB. THAT TOO IS SHIMMERING AND PERFECT.
THE THOUGHTS DANCE, VIBRATE, SING IN HIS BRAIN; BUT WHAT HE FEELS ISN'T IN THE WORDS...
...IT'S IN THE WEB.
AND THE WEB DISSOLVES...

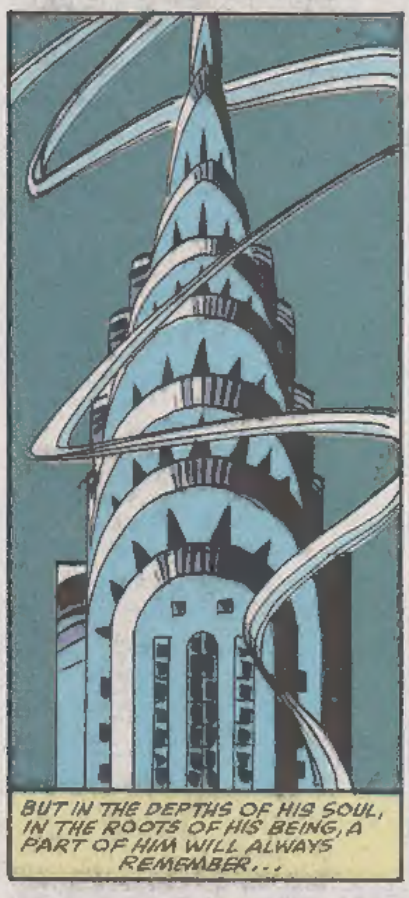
...AND THE MISTS RETURN.
BLACK CROW...?
Behind you...
YOU... YOU DID THIS.
No. The Spider-Medicine is strong in you. You freely chose to accept its vision.
I simply provided the opportunity for that choice. Just as I did for--
GRRROWWWRRR
--him.

POWWWRRR
FIREHEART!
NOT FIREHEART--
--PUMA!
AND I HAVE WORK TO DO!
I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND. WE'RE BACK IN THE CITY! HOW--?
All you need understand is this--
There is an innocent life at stake.

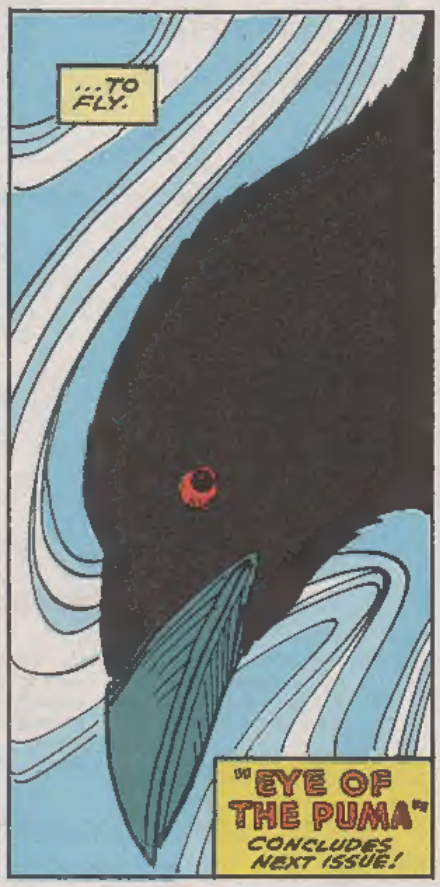

Puma must be stopped.
THERE'S SO MUCH HE WANTS TO SAY, SO MANY QUESTIONS HE WANTS TO ASK.
BLACK CROW--
BUT WHEN HE TRIES TO GRASP THE WORDS, FORM THE QUESTIONS...
...THEY DISSOLVE, LIKE A FRAGILE WEB, IN HIS HANDS.
--WAIT!
GONE.
WAS HE EVER TRULY THERE? HE WONDERS. DID I STAND ON A MOUNTAIN AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD? DID I GLIMPSE SOMETHING HUGE AND SACRED AND TRUE?
THE LINE BETWEEN REALITY AND IMAGINATION, ILLUSION AND TRUTH, HAS GROWN GOSSAMER-THIN TONIGHT.
ALL HE KNOWS FOR SURE IS THAT THE SHADOWS HAVE STOPPED THEIR WHISPERING. THE KNOT OF FEAR AND PARANOIA IN HIS GUT HAS UNWOUND.
HE FEELS WHOLE.
AND FREE.


"THERE IS AN INNOCENT LIFE AT STAKE.
" PUMA MUST BE STOPPED."
HE'S CERTAIN, TOO (DON'T ASK HIM HOW, HE SIMPLY IS), THAT BLACK CROW'S WORDS WERE TRUE. AND HE KNOWS HE'S UP TO THE TASK.


HE FEELS MOUNTAIN-TALL, CANYON-DEEP, THE SPIDER-MEDICINE IS STRONG IN HIM.
WHAT'S HAPPENED TONIGHT, HE SENSES, WILL FADE. THE VISION WILL BECOME A DREAM. THE DREAM, A MEMORY, THE MEMORY, PERHAPS, FORGOTTEN.


BUT IN THE DEPTHS OF HIS SOUL, IN THE ROOTS OF HIS BEING, A PART OF HIM WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER...

...WILL SPREAD RAVEN-WINGS AND SOAR UP, THROUGH HIS HEART...
...GIVING HIM THE STRENGTH AND THE COURAGE...


...TO FLY.
"EYE OF THE PUMA" CONCLUDES NEXT ISSUE!